

IV

HOME ECONOMICS IN THE
ELEMENTARY AND HIGH
SCHOOLS

Very few girls and women can have the advantage of a longer education than the elementary and high schools. Many of those that can afford to continue after completing the elementary course, drop out after two or three years in the high school because of lack of interest in the studies.

The high school of today and tomorrow should meet her interests as well as the needs of social life. Most high schools aim for the completion of a particular course rather than for the needs and interests of the girl.

Secondary school work should not neglect physical improvement. Thus, the health work should be taught from the kindergarten on through the normal schools and colleges, so that the body can be kept in a good physical condition. Right ways of living started early in life are very easy to follow up as the person becomes older. All secondary work should give the individual a broader view of life and enable the pupil to select a vacation which will be a life interest.

A knowledge of home economics should enable any girl or woman to be a better homemaker, producer, or consumer. There are scores of girls who have to give up school to take charge of the home affairs. I have a definite example of that in my class at the Dayton High School. This girl had to stop school at the middle of her second year in high school to keep house. However, this girl may be able to resume her studies at the beginning of the next year. These cases are rare, for, usually, when once she stops, studies are not resumed again.

If, as it has been shown time and time again by statistics, many girls do not go any further than the high school and the majority do not go to high school, then home economics should be taught in the elementary and high schools.

The great aim of this course is to teach girls that home life, under right conditions, is best for girls. It is their duty to raise the standards of American homes. It is through the influence of the home that the characters

of our future citizens are moulded. The girls should know the principles, sources, and functions of food; how food may be prepared to meet the needs of the body; and how it may be served attractively, as well as how proper food may be selected. She should be taught to clothe herself attractively and simply. She should acquire the knowledge of textiles, so that she can clothe her family in the best way for health and in accordance with the family income. She should also be taught the practical and scientific management of the home.

The art of true living is the big principle to be taught by the Home Economics Course. There are many fields of work a girl can enter upon, leading from this course. Demonstration agents are in great demand. Then, the home economic workers go into the slums and settlements and teach mothers how to care for their homes and children. Home economic teachers can find places in high schools and elementary schools now where there is a demand for home economics in the school.

In the schools of tomorrow we will find some phase of home economics in every grade from the kindergarten through the college. At the present time we find it in the larger schools. Even as early as the kindergarten and first grade home economics may be taught. Is it taught under that name? Of course not. Little does the child think of home problems at this age. Yet they study home life by making sand tables. Barns are made, as well as pigs, dogs, horses, and other farm things. They play games in connection with this, such as delivering milk or bread. Here, too, the health program can be brought in by bringing in the foods the children should eat. People have to be clothed and dolls are dressed or paper dolls are used. Each fall the family is prepared for winter. The tiny tots make jelly, such as they have seen their mothers make at home. In this way they learn something of the home tasks that their mothers have to do.

In the second grade the same work is continued, only under another head. Primitive life in contrast with the present is illustrated. The kinds of homes, dress, and foods are studied. Sand tables are made, illustrating primitive life.

In the third grade the little girl will

be quite proud of her canvas needle book or paint rag. Indian life can be the main problem. Indian clothing is quite easily constructed and their mode of living is quite different from that of the child of the present day. Some people say that this is not home economics; but what is it? It leads to nothing else. The child's native ability is being used to develop him along the lines of art and home life. He becomes familiar with surrounding occupations of different stages in life. The children are taught, through the health work, the kinds of foods that will make big muscle, and make them grow. The things that the different foods do for the body are taught also. If a boy is told that by drinking a quart of milk a day he will soon be strong enough to play on the base ball team, he becomes interested and tries to drink as much milk as he can. In this way we can put the proper food selection before him.

In the fourth grade the life, dress, and occupations of the Greeks and Romans could be introduced in connection with the project work in history. Articles of sewing such as penwipers, bean bags, and clothespin bags could be made. Neatness and accuracy should be stressed, so that the children will not become careless as they develop. The position of the body and manipulation of tools should be closely watched at all times.

In the fifth and sixth grades the boys' and girls' work should be divided. The interests of the boys and girls are becoming different. The boy is no longer interested in the same things as the girl and better work can be accomplished when each can do what he is interested in. The boys have shop work and the girls have housework, including foods and clothing. Small articles are made by the girls such as pot holders, Christmas gifts, and similar things. Darning lessons are given.

The little girls will be interested in knowing the kinds of food that will make them strong and healthy and able to run and play. If there is a little brother or sister in the family they will eagerly strive to learn how to care for it and little things they can do for it. Each year the work develops more and more into its own field until finally it becomes a field of its own.

In the seventh and eighth grades the girls make simple garments, such as cook-

ing aprons. In making these garments they use the sewing machine and in this way learn to operate the machines and use the various attachments. Then they study the economical buying and cutting of materials, the furnishings of the home, and textiles, that is, ready made clothing versus hand made or home made clothing. Also, in connection with the foods work they study the proper selection and buying of foods and learn the kinds of foods to combine to make a balanced meal. Health work, which is a phase of home economics, should be a part of the course too.

This subject matter may be too advanced for some localities, but the teacher of home economics can soon determine her group and suit the work to their needs. It may be better for some groups to study the selection of clothing and the furnishing of the home rather than to construct garments. Their home conditions may need bettering while their mother or someone in the family sews. They lose interest in the work when they think that there is no need for them to learn to sew, when someone else always does the sewing for the family and they are not allowed to put their knowledge to practice. The girl should understand home economics and should know the fundamentals and principles of food, sanitation, clothing, and hygiene. She should have an appreciation of and sympathy with the problems involved in running her home.

In planning the course of study for the work in the seventh and eighth grades, the teacher should first know the needs of the girl. She should make a general survey of the homes in regard to sanitary, economic, social, and spiritual conditions. Of course, in some localities the course of study would be quite different from some others, if it is adapted to the needs of the homes.

The time devoted to the work will vary in different schools according to the school system. In the grades, usually, a period of forty-five minutes three times a week is devoted to the work, but it varies in different places. The time really should be longer. There should be plenty of time to teach the girls the problems which relate to their lives, such as the care of the home, selection, cost, and care of clothing, and other related topics. It is impractical to follow any textbook word

for word unless it suits the needs of your girls.

Home economics lends itself to modern methods of teaching. There are many advantages shown by teaching by projects. The girls have a definite goal to work for and do not lose interest, but work towards the goal. That goal may be a dress, apron, or any useful article. The project method presents the problem as a whole and then develops each step; and the girls see just why each step is made and the work moves smoothly along. Then, too, the girls have a part in deciding upon the project and this creates a stronger interest when they feel that they have a part in the planning.

In the high schools the work should be a continuation of the previous work, the standards being raised each year. The course should offer practically the same thing to the girl that expects to continue her work, as it does to the girl that will have to stop school. It should enable her to choose more wisely her later life occupation. She should be given subject matter that will help her in her daily home living. She should be taught to choose healthful food, clothing, and proper living conditions. She should appreciate the sciences and arts related to these studies.

The periods should be longer in the high school than in the elementary grades, as the work should be made much fuller. Two hours, two or three times a week, should be sufficient for the high school course. The lessons should be arranged in series using the project method. However, throughout the grammar grades and high school the fundamentals of health and right living should be the basis of the work.

In the four year high school we usually find the curriculum divided into courses. In the larger high schools we find a regular home economics course. This course deals with the home problems, foods, and clothing, right living, hygiene, and other subjects related to these. The girl that is interested in home economics has a chance to take this course and follow up the work she is interested in.

Usually, the foods work begins with the preparation of dishes for breakfasts and finally the serving of the breakfast. The value of the different foods to the body are studied in connection with the preparation of

the foods. The luncheon and dinner are studied in due course. The clothing work is started by the construction of simple garments and on through the years more difficult problems are presented. Millinery is usually a part of the course.

A course in home management is sometimes given. It is much more important for the girl to know how to choose wisely, to buy, plan, and organize, and to learn to appreciate and enjoy the real value of home life than it is for her to develop a high degree of skill in performing any of the home duties. Therefore, the four year high school should include in the home economics course a study of how to choose, buy, and plan for the home. There should really be no definite program for the home economics course, as new problems develop from year to year and the field is constantly growing.

The junior high school usually consists of the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. In a school which includes these three grades we will find children of all classes: some from poor homes, some from prosperous homes, and some immigrants, perhaps, not accustomed to healthful ways of living. It would be an ideal situation if there could be distinct groups made of each class. The girl that comes from the poor home will be apt to leave school at an early age to help support the family. This group will then of course not want the same information about home economics as the girls that will continue the study. They should receive a course in self-service. These girls have much to learn of health; the selection of neat, proper clothing; the selection of the right kinds of food; and of the proper social standards.

The girl from the prosperous home usually continues her work on through college. She should have a general knowledge of the principles of home economics. More stress can be put on details as she will spend a longer period of time in studying the different phases of home economics.

The immigrants will have an entirely different problem. They should be taught right living, health, and proper home management rather than the mechanical side of preparing foods and making garments.

However, it is not often that it is possible for these divisions to be made and a course has to be given that will include all. The

principles of home economics "put across" in the right way would be the best plan.

In the senior high school the work is continued from the junior high school. The girl that enters the senior high school, expecting to complete the course, usually goes on to some higher school. The work in the senior high school stresses the mechanical side of the work more; the girl's interests are different, and she lays a foundation for further work. The course however should be complete enough for her to have a general knowledge of home economics in case she goes no further in school work.

In the rural schools an entirely different problem presents itself. Heretofore in the rural high schools teachers not trained in home economics have been expected to teach the subject. The teachers should be trained not only in home economics, but in agriculture as well. The course offered should try to keep the boys and girls on the farms.

The work in home economics in rural high schools should not be confined to the school room. It should extend to neighboring farms, dairies, poultry farms, and even homes. There should be a community wide interest.

The use of the food grown at home should be one phase of the food work; the healthful handling of milk could be another; and the proper raising of poultry could be still another. Poultry, pig, and corn clubs could be formed.

For the clothing side the girls can select suitable places for homes, considering the location, drainage, sun, outlook, and other important points. They can plan the house, furnish each room from paint to furniture, and get estimates on the cost. This would lead the girls to try to arrange their homes in the best manner possible.

The home economic work in the rural high school can really be made more interesting and be brought to have more relation with the home than it can in the city schools.

In every community there are slums. There should be no such conditions existing anywhere and it is a large work for the home economics teachers to educate the children of today to have better homes in the future, as well as to correct the conditions existing today. When the children are not old enough to take a course

in home economics, they can at least be taught how to keep themselves clean and keep their bodies in a healthy condition. Probably the cause at home is insufficient clothing, because no one can sew, and the family is too poor to have it done. Special night classes are given in some places where women can learn to cook and sew.

In order that our nation may continue to grow and prosper and be the head of all nations, we must have better homes. Very little argument is necessary to convince wide-awake educators of the real need of the introduction of home problems into school work. Miss Frances Willard has said: "The mission of the ideal woman is to make the whole world homelike." Therefore, it is our duty as home economics teachers to present the home problems in such a way that the women of today will make their homes homelike and we will have better homes throughout the whole country. Victor Hugo says:

"A house is built of bricks and stones,
Of sills and posts and piers,
But a home is built of loving deeds,
That stand a thousand years."

There has been a constant and growing demand for regular instruction in home economics. Home economics has spread widely over the country and schools which a few years ago did not have it, now have a regular home economics teacher. Departments have been organized and have grown rapidly. There are so many fields branching out from home economics that a course in it is in demand in any good school. Health work is now on a boom. New fields of home economics are constantly being discovered and this is because it is not at a standstill. The demand is growing. Our mothers never heard of a course in home economics, when they were at school; but few girls ever leave school now without hearing of the work or, most probably, having studied some phase of it.

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Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. As by the one health is preserved, strengthened, and invigorated; by the other, virtue (which is the health of the mind) is kept alive, cherished and confirmed.—Richard Steele.